

Action for a Better Community, Inc.
Action Front Center
33 Chestnut Street, 2nd Floor
Rochester, New York 14604
September 30, 2003

Jo Anne Barnhart
Commissioner, Social Security Administration
P.O. Box 17703
Baltimore, MD 21235-7703

Dear Commissioner Barnhart:

I am writing to support the proposed regulations for continuation of benefits for people who are participating in a program of vocational rehabilitation services, employment services, or other support services (published for public comment on August 1, 2003). The proposed regulations would change the rules which guide how SSA decides to allow continuation of cash benefits for people in vocational or other support training who no longer meet the definition of eligibility for SSI benefits.

I believe that this is a very important proposal and I urge you to publish it as a final rule as soon as possible. Young people with disabilities should remain in school or in vocational training as long as possible to acquire the skills to become as independent as possible. This proposed regulation will make it possible for more young people to finish their educational, vocational, or other support training.

In addition, I recommend that benefits be preserved for those individuals who have a high probability of acquiring a disability i.e. HIV/AIDS or mental illness. Both of these conditions often have a long incubation period initiated by short bouts with illness which may make it difficult to constantly remain in educational pursuits. By including young people who have this high probability of future disability, their Medicaid benefits can remain and thus assure the likelihood that they can obtain medical care early and minimize the disabling conditions which come with both of these disabilities. Research indicates that young people in high risk categories are highly susceptible to both of these conditions.

Sincerely,

Rita S. Eggert
Policy Analyst